

AGA KHAN MUSEUM CURRICULUM PROJECT

THE POWER OF LIGHT AND SHADOW IN ISLAMIC ART VISUAL ARTS UNIT PLAN GRADE 11

Written by Jane Dewar
Edited by Peter Bates

These resources were prepared by teachers, for teachers in partnership with the Aga Khan Museum, the Ontario Ministry of Education, and the Ontario Art Education Association. These Curriculum-linked resources were inspired by the Museum's Permanent Collection. Object information and images courtesy of the Aga Khan Museum.

Visual Arts Unit Plan Grade 11 AVI3M

Unit: The Power of Light and Shadow in Islamic Art

Connections to the Aga Khan

Context

Students will learn to recognize and understand the use of light and shadow in a variety of Islamic artworks from ancient times up to and including contemporary society with examples from the Aga Khan Museum, including the dramatic architecture of the museum itself. The Aga Khan Museum is located on a 6.8 hectare site on Wynford Drive in the northwest quadrant of the Don Valley and Eglinton Avenue in Toronto.

Summary

In this unit, students will explore Islamic Art and Architecture with a focus on the manipulation of light and shadow. Other contemporary artists who work with light and shadow will also be introduced. Students will employ an enquiry-based model to create an artwork using light and shadow (a variety of activities are suggested i.e. manipulating found and recycled materials placed in a particular way in relation to a single light source such that the shadow becomes the artwork).

The Ontario Curriculum Grades 11 and 12, *Revised, 2010*: Visual Arts Grade 11 AVI3M Curriculum Expectations

Overall and Specific Expectations

A. Creating and Presenting

A1. The Creative Process: apply the creative process to create a variety of art works, individually and/or collaboratively;

A1.1 - use a variety of strategies, individually and/or collaboratively, to generate, explore, and elaborate on ideas and to develop and revise detailed plans for the creation of art works that address a variety of creative challenges.

A1.2 - apply the appropriate stages of the creative process to produce and revise two- and three dimensional art works using a variety of traditional and contemporary media

A1.3 - document their use of each stage of the creative process, as well as varied and extensive research, in a portfolio that includes art works created for a variety of purposes, and review and reflect on the contents of their portfolio to determine how effectively they have used the creative process

A2. The Elements and Principles of Design: apply elements and principles of design to create art works for the purpose of self-expression and to communicate ideas, information, and/or messages;

- A2.1 - explore how elements and principles of design can be used to convey emotion and enhance personal expression, and use a combination of these elements and principles to create two- and three-dimensional art works that express personal feelings and communicate specific emotions to an audience
- A2.2 - apply elements and principles of design as well as art-making conventions to create art works that comment and/or communicate their personal perspective on issues related to social justice or the environment

A3. Production and Presentation: produce art works, using a variety of media/materials and traditional and/or emerging technologies, tools, and techniques, and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of ways of presenting their works and the works of others

A3.1 - explore and experiment with media, including alternative media, and current technologies, and use them to create a variety of art works

A3.2 - explore a range of traditional and current materials, technologies, techniques, and tools used by visual artists

B. Reflecting, Responding and Analysing

B1. The Critical Analysis Process: demonstrate an understanding of the critical analysis process by examining, interpreting, evaluating, and reflecting on various art works;

B1.1 - analyse their initial response to art works

B1.2 - deconstruct the visual content and the use of elements and principles of design in their own art work and the work of others

B1.3 - explain, with reference to particular works, both historical and contemporary how knowledge of an art work's cultural and historical context, achieved through research, has clarified and enriched their understanding of the work's intent and meaning

B1.4 - describe and reflect on the qualities of their own art works and the works of others, and evaluate the effectiveness of these works, using a variety of criteria

B2. Art, Society and Values: demonstrate an understanding of how art works reflect the society in which they were created, and of how they can affect personal values;

B2.1 analyse the function and social impact of different kinds of art works in both past and present societies

B2.2 explain, on the basis of research, ways in which various art works are a response to and a reflection of the society in which they were created

B2.3 reflect on and explain how creating and analysing art works has affected their personal identity and values and/or changed their perceptions of society and social issues

C. Foundations

C1. Terminology: demonstrate an understanding of, and use correct terminology when referring to, elements, principles, and other components related to visual arts;

C1.1 demonstrate an understanding of the elements and principles of design, and use terminology related to these elements and principles correctly and appropriately when creating or analysing art works

C1.2 explain terminology related to a variety of techniques, materials, and tools, and use this terminology correctly and appropriately when creating, analysing, and/or presenting art works

C1.3 using appropriate terminology, explain the creative process and describe in detail the critical analysis process, with particular reference to the role of deconstruction in the latter process

C2. Conventions and Techniques: demonstrate an understanding of conventions and techniques used in the creation of visual art works;

C2.1 demonstrate an understanding of a wide variety of techniques that artists use to achieve a range of specific effects

C3. Responsible Practices: demonstrate an understanding of responsible practices related to visual arts

C3.2 demonstrate an understanding of health and safety issues and conscientious practices associated with the use of materials, property, techniques, tools, and technologies in visual arts, and apply these practices when creating and/or presenting art works

C3.3 demonstrate an understanding of how the production and presentation of art works can affect the environment, and apply environmentally responsible practices when creating, presenting, and promoting art works

Overall Learning Goals

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- Recognize and understand the use of light and shadow in a variety of Islamic artworks from ancient times up to and including contemporary society;
- Recognize and understand the use of light and shadow in the architecture of the museum itself;
- Use the Creative Process and an inquiry-based model to plan, create, and share their own artwork or contribute to a collaborative artwork;
- Identify and describe ways in which their artwork describes their own identity and values, and the society in which they were created;
- Co-create success criteria and understand what their successful learning looks like and what to look for during the learning and how to reflect and articulate what they have learned through this process.

Instructional Components and Context

Lesson 1: Light and Shadow in Islamic Art and Culture 150 minutes

Readiness

This lesson is designed to introduce students to Islamic Art and Culture, and to see how light and shadow have been used in the arts of Muslim societies throughout history. Students will then create an artwork using light and shadow to demonstrate how their knowledge affects their personal identity and values and/or changed their perceptions of society and social issues. Students should be familiar with the Elements and Principles of Design, and the Creative and Critical Analysis processes, and should approach this unit with a willingness to take risks, think creatively, and learn from others.

Whole Class⇒*Introduction to the Aga Khan Museum, Islamic Art and Culture*

Show this Google Slide show: www.bit.ly/agakhangrade11 to familiarize students with key background information [text from the power point]:

Background:

- Islamic principles and teachings – a way of life, religious code and legal system established by Muhammad (c 570-632); the teachings were revealed to him over a period of many years beginning in 610 and they became the text known as the Qur'an
- Primary premise is monotheism (Allah) and the recognition of Muhammad as Allah's last prophet (others were Abraham, Moses and Jesus)
- The Qur'an and the Traditions take a firm stance against idolatry and the worship of images
- This form of decoration stressed the importance of unity, logic and order
- Influenced by Islamic classical traditions and enhanced, during the 7th century, by Islamic mathematicians, astronomers and other scientists; these traditions continue to today
- Paintings and decorative elements generally do not utilize linear perspective or shadows; to the Western eye, they may seem flat and two-dimensional; however, the Persian paintings, for example the Shahnameh paintings, show complex perspectives that are different from Western two-or three-point perspective. And the geometric, vegetal and calligraphic designs often show complex layering of elements and foreground-background ambiguity.

Examples of Light and Shadow in the diverse arts of Islamic civilizations

- Tile Panel – deeply carved and glazed earthenware is typical of architectural embellishment of Central Asia
- Processional Standard ('Alam) – used in Shia processions; this example is pierced steel from Iran or India 16th century; the form, decorative elements and function are closely intertwined

The Museum and Site

- Consider the combination of contemporary and historical elements in the architecture of the museum itself, by prize-winning architect Fumihiko Maki
- Architect Fumihiko Maki used light as his inspiration
- Not only is light ever-present in the building, but depending on the time of day or season, light will animate the building in myriad ways
- Throwing patterns on the exterior walls of Brazilian granite
- Pierced screens are positioned to capitalize on the play of light as the sun moves across the open-roofed courtyard
- Enhancing interior spaces; finishes and materials were chosen to absorb or reflect light; glass panels do not interfere; pierced tin, wood and concrete screens reiterate the museum's iconic symbol

Contemporary Examples

- Aga Khan participates annually in the Nuit Blanche (Toronto's sunset to sunrise arts festival "Experience the city transformed by artists")
- #CharBagh – refers to the Persian style quadrilateral garden divided by walkways or flowing water; in this installation, a large scale digital garden is projected on the façade of the museum and audiences interact using cellphones to add new content in real-time
- The structure becomes a metaphor working with open data investigating sociopolitical territories; data is collected from different cities around the world, thematically curated hashtags examine how the ethical use of social media can be used for positive social change
- #sparks from 2016 ("Lights, sounds, shadows and people at the Aga Khan Park")
- Built from a hard structure and covered in soft stretchy fabric, several individual "sparks" are clustered together to create new space inside; light glows from each piece, filtered through the soft fabric; shadows from the visitors dance in the light as their bodies are silhouetted against the glowing design
- Contemporary Islamic laser cut doors and screens

Contemporary Artists Who Use Shadow Art (see websites under Resources)

- Kumi Yamashita – sculptures using light and shadow; faces and figures appear out of the most unlikely shapes and materials
- Larry Kagan – steel wire shadow art
- Anila Quayyum Agha – ornately carved wooden cube
- Ernst Haeckel – forest chandelier
- Diet Wiegman – shadowy figures out of chaos
- Rashad Alakbarov – light and shadow paintings
- Tim Noble and Sue Webster – garbage; discarded wood pieces
- Pol Ubeda Hervas – "I'm not there" (his shoes with shadow)

Individual or Small Group ⇒ Experimenting with Light and Shadow

Student Challenge: students experimenting with creating, and/or using shadows as inspiration for visual, media or performance art. Options:

1. Chalk shadow drawings
2. Silhouette
3. Hand shadow puppets
4. Body shadow performances
5. Shadow puppets
6. Create gestures out of wire and tinfoil; trace the shadow to make gesture sketches of classmates; tell a story (children's book? Graphic novel? Using a variety of gesture sketches and text)
7. Cut paper
8. Pierced canvas, pierced lampshades
9. Light art

Terminology**Allah**

Aramaic word for "God."

Islam

The religion of the Muslims, a monotheistic faith revealed through Muhammad.

Muhammad

7th century CE prophet. Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the Word of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

Qur'an

The sacred book of the Islamic religion. Central message: for humanity to believe in and worship God and live a pious and ethical life.

Idolatry

Worship, veneration, or glorification of idols.

Materials

Materials will change dependent upon the inquiry chosen below:

- Found and recycled materials that can be manipulated to create interesting shadows
- Tape, scissors, and other tools to help connect the "junk"
- A strong source of direct light (strong flashlight, lamp, spotlight)
- A camera or device for capturing the shadow artworks

This lesson is designed to help students to explore the Aga Khan Museum, Toronto. The Aga Khan Museum is located on a 6.8 hectare site on Wynford Drive in the northwest quadrant of the Don Valley and Eglinton Avenue in Toronto.

Whole Class⇒ **Experiential Learning through Gallery Visit**

1. Visit the Aga Khan Museum, Toronto. If you are unable to visit the gallery, go to their website for links to images from their collection and use other on-line resources to see images of Islamic tiles, mosaics, ceramics and architectural details. . (Aga Khan Museum. 2016. *Aga Khan Collections*. Retrieved from <https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/collection>)

Guiding Questions:

1. *Identify the broad range of artworks (architectural decoration; calligraphy and illumination; ceramics; luxury objects; metalwork; painted manuscripts) that depict a strong sense of light and shadow either literally or figuratively.*
2. *What is the significance of the play of light and shadow?*
3. *How might the art object be interpreted in different kinds of light? Or none at all?*
4. *How might your relationship to an art object change if it were seen outside of the gallery in a more traditional setting?*
5. *What role does geometry and geometric design play?*
6. *Where have you seen similar repeat patterns or shapes in the architecture or decoration of our homes, schools, local buildings?*
7. *Which of the elements and principles of design are most prominent in the artworks you are viewing?*
8. *What are the benefits of visiting a museum? (see in real life a collection of the artistic, intellectual and scientific heritage of Muslim civilizations across the centuries; deeper understanding of the artworks; find similarities and differences among our cultures; recognize the creative and mathematical processes common to each other, and to artworks throughout different cultures and times; ability to think critically about art and culture)*

Individual⇒**Making Connections**

Ask the students to select one artwork (which could be architectural decoration; calligraphy and illumination; ceramics; luxury object; metalwork; painted manuscripts; etc) that they are really interested in exploring more deeply (may take photos for reference for future planning). Students will describe their initial reactions to this artwork and explain the reasons for their reactions. See **BLM #1 Looking at Islamic Art** or answer the following questions:

- a. Describe it (*What do you see? What words would you use to describe it? How would you describe the lines, the shapes, the colours? How would you describe it to someone who could not see it?*)
- b. Relate it (*What does this art remind you of? What things do you recognize / what things seem new to you? What interests you most about it?*)

- c. Analyse it (*Use the elements and principles of design to talk about this artwork*)
 - d. Interpret it (*What title would you give this artwork? Who made this artwork? What is its purpose? How did you arrive at this idea? What do you think it would be like to live in this time? How might this artwork be created/used/decorated differently in current times?*)
 - e. Evaluate it (*What is good about this artwork? What things would you change? Why should anyone else see this work of art? What would you do with it if you owned it? What is worth remembering about this artwork?*)
9. *What are the benefits of visiting a museum?* (see in real life a collection of the artistic, intellectual and scientific heritage of Muslim civilizations across the centuries; deeper understanding of the artworks; find similarities and differences among our cultures; recognize the role that light and shadow play in the artworks; ability to think critically about art and culture)

Action! Shadow Design from Found Objects 150 – 300 minutes

Individual or Small Group*⇒*Creating Patterns

Art-making Inquiry Question: *How can you create an artwork that reflects your understanding of light and shadow in Islamic art and makes connections to your own personal identity and values, or a more contemporary society? How can you share your work in a more permanent presentation or a public forum? Consider these possibilities (and refer to the guiding questions below as you work through the creative process).*

1. Students may individually or in pairs assemble found and recycled objects so that the SHADOW of the collection of objects depicts an image or pattern on the wall
2. Cut or pierce your pattern into fabric, textiles, lamp shade, or even a pre-stretched canvas to employ the use of light in your design
3. Create shadows from the sun and trace them using chalk or water-based paint
4. Create an artwork using paper or painted silhouettes
5. Create the figures and tell a story using shadow play – flat articulated cut-out figures
6. Tell a story using hand shadow puppets
7. Create a performance using body shadow (see variety of performances on YouTube ie. Shadow Theatre Group, or Shadow Acts)
8. Create gestures out of wire and tinfoil; trace the shadow to make gesture sketches of classmates; tell a story (children's book? Graphic novel? Using a variety of gesture sketches and text)
9. Create an artwork using the pierced paper technique
10. Light art – 'painting' with light; light is the main medium of expression (sculptures, installations, performances)

Guiding Questions:

- *How does your planning and problem-solving demonstrate your use of the creative process?* (doodling; sketchbook; photo documentation; voice recording;

visual resources from museum visit or on-line; virtual bulletin boards [ie. Pinterest]; brainstorming)

- *Which of the elements and principles of design are most prominent in your design? How would your design change if you were to use different elements and principles?*
- *What changes to you notice when light is added to your design? What are the things that are created that you did not anticipate?*
- *As you work through the production of preliminary work in any of the activities above, how has your design changed or improved based on feedback from peers and teacher? What revisions or refinements have you made?*
- *In what ways have you used your visual arts skills in math? And your math skills in art?*

Assessment

A triangulated assessment strategy (observations, conversations and product) will be relied on throughout this unit, offering ample opportunities for assessing for, as, and of learning, while meeting the performance standards on the achievement charts.

All of the inquiry-based activities and consolidation have ample opportunities for differentiated instruction and modifications during assessments, both by the student self-selecting the opportunities, or by the teacher encouraging individual students to choose appropriate activities for their own growth.

Teachers will be looking for students to demonstrate:

- knowledge and understanding of content
- thinking skills through planning and processing and through critical and creative thinking
- communication by expressing and organizing ideas, and in creating a final product for a specific audience
- application of knowledge and skills to next context, and makes connections to themselves, their community or the world beyond them

A_{FOR}L Assessment FOR learning

- Assessment FOR learning will be measured by noting questions and responses through the background lesson.
- Teachers may wish to provide a more in-depth study based on the students' responses.

A_{AS}L Assessment AS learning

- Assessment AS learning constitutes feedback from both teacher and peers, students monitoring their own progress and making adjustments, discussions, and teachers will pose questions to make students' learning explicit.
- Teachers can collect evidence of observations and conversations in a variety of ways from low-tech (paper notes, post-its, observation checklists, notes in staff

handbooks) to using technology tools available (audio recording conversations and observations, Google docs, Evernote, blogs, etc).

T A L Assessment OF learning

- To conduct assessment OF learning, students and teacher will co-construct a rubric outlining the success criteria to determine the essential learning for the final consolidation and the Choice Board activities (see below).
- Include in the overall response an opportunity for both student and teacher to share which aspects of the artwork or creative process were done well, which need improvement, and next steps. An example of what a rubric might look like is attached as **The Power of Light and Shadow in Islamic art Rubric BLM#3**.

Consolidation Choice Board 75 - 225 minutes

Demonstrate your learning by completing one of the activities on the **Choice Board attached as BLM #2**

Individual⇒Differentiated Assessment OF Learning

1. Respond to the guiding questions throughout this lesson in a blogpost
2. Create an art “event” at your school (like Nuit Blanche)
3. Write a blogpost “Top 10 Shadow Artists” including images and interesting facts about the artist
4. Research career opportunities at a gallery or museum and share your findings in a creative way (Note: the Aga Khan website includes interviews with two staff members about their careers, see Behind the Scenes <https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/collection/behind-scenes>)
5. Write a blogpost about your visit to the Museum and what you’ve learned about light and shadow and how it has affected your identity and values
6. Film a news report about your trip to the Aga Khan. Interview some of your classmates. Include examples of art.
7. Film a news report about the shadow artwork your class has created. Be sure to talk about what you learned through the creative process.
8. Create a website for your class to showcase their artwork; include images, blogpost, tabs for future projects
9. Your Choice (following a discussion with teacher)

Resources:

Anila Quayyum Agha. (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.anilaagha.com/intersections/>

CUDED Design & Inspiration (2016). 30 Examples of Shadow Art. Retrieved from www.cuded.com/2014/08/30-examples-of-shadow-art/

Faya – an exploration of light, beauty and space. (n.d.). www.faya.ae/faya-mashrabiya-gallery/

Hosmer, Katie. (2013). Chandelier produces a forest of wild tree shadows. Retrieved from <http://mymodernmet.com/hilden-and-diaz-forms-in-nature/>

Kagan, Larry. (2013). Larry Kagan sculpture. Retrieved from <http://larrykagansculpture.com/>

Noble, Tim and Webster, Sue. (2014). AxRxTxWxExRxKxS. Retrieved from <http://www.timnobleandsuewebster.com/artwerks.html>

Nuit Blanche Toronto. (2016). Retrieved from www.nbto.com

Rashad Alakbarov. (2016). Rashad Alakbarov paints with shadows and light. Retrieved from <http://art-sheep.com/rashad-alakbarov-paints-with-shadows-and-light/>

The Aga Khan Museum. (2016). Aga Khan Collections. Retrieved from <https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/collection>

The Aga Khan Museum. (2016). Behind the Scenes. Retrieved from <https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/collection/behind-scenes>

The Aga Khan Museum. (2016). *Learning at The Aga Khan Museum*. Free pdf download at <https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/learn/educators#teachers>

Ubeda Hervas, Pol. (2014). Pol Ubeda. Retrieved from <http://www.tryffelgrisen.com/artists/pol-ubeda>

Diet Wiegman. (2016). Retrieved from <http://dietwiegman.tumblr.com/light%20sculptures>

Web Urbanist - Architecture Art, Design & Built Environments. (2017). Drawing with Darkness: 24 Incredible Works of Shadow Art. Retrieved from <http://weburbanist.com/2015/03/25/drawing-with-darkness-24-incredible-works-of-shadow-art/>

Yamashita, Kumi. (2016) Light and Shadow. Retrieved from <http://www.kumiyamashita.com/light-and-shadow/>